

*Theology vol 123.*

THE  
CONTROVERSY

In Relation to the  
Test *and* Corporation ACTS

Clearly disputed, in a  
DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A  
DISSENTER

AND A  
Member of the Establish'd Church.

The ARGUMENTS on both Sides containing a full Explanation of every thing relating to this important Question.

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L O N D O N :

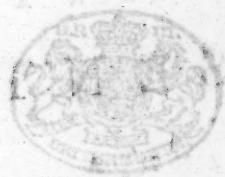
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THE  
COUNTY OF RYSS

IN THE  
MAYOR'S COURT

DECEMBER 18



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A  
D I A L O G U E

BETWEEN A

Member of the Church of *England*

AND A

Protestant Dissenter,

Concerning the Repeal of the Test-Act.

C H U R C H M A N.



A M glad to see you, Sir ; this is a Pleasure I did not expect : I thought you had resolved never more to visit this wicked Town.

*Dissenter.* Some urgent Business call'd me hither.

*Ch.* Is it any thing I can serve you in ?

*Diss.* I believe you may.

B

*Ch.*

*Ch.* You have always known me dispos'd to serve you in any thing that's reasonable, and have experienced it on some Occasions.

*Diff.* Nay, this is a Thing not only reasonable, but I may say necessary also ; the Honour of God is concern'd in it.

*Ch.* Now you oblige me to insist that you tell it me.

*Diff.* I have known you long to be a Friend to Religion, altho' you are not in the perfect Way, and therefore I think I may venture to tell you the important Business I am come upon, tho' 'tis a Secret that should not be reveal'd 'till it is mentioned in the Parliament House.

*Ch.* What then, 'tis some political Matter, I find ! I thought it was something wherein Religion was deeply concerned.

*Diff.* And to it is, Mr. *Churchman* ; Religion is also concern'd in it.

*Ch.* If so, why should you make a Secret of it 'till the Parliament meets ? that's a Method used when Jobs are to be done, and Things carried by Art and Surprise ; but Religion should be used after a fairer Manner.

*Diff.* Oh, Sir ! Satan is very busy, and his Servants are very busy ; they are very many also, and very zealous too : He hath Spies lurking in all Corners, to discover



cover and defeat the Purposes of good Men; and if we mix not the Wisdom of the Serpent with the Innocency of the Dove, true Professors will be run down, and the Wicked triumph; therefore we cannot be too careful nor sudden in our Doings, when the Cause of Religion is to be serv'd.

*Ch.* Very well, but now come to the Point.

*Diff.* Why you must know, Sir, that we have long lain under Persecution on Account of our Religion, and can no longer bear it.

*Ch.* Persecution! we have none of it in *England*, and you would not have the Parliament advise the King to put it down in Popish Countries?

*Diff.* It would be, I own, a glorious Thing to fight God's Battles in a strange Land, but this is not to be hoped for in our Days; I mean it not, I mean that we at home should not be persecuted.

*Ch.* And how can you say ye are?

*Diff.* Nay, how can you say we are not, when those who are most godly are most discouraged.

*Ch.* You mean, I suppose, by godly Men, Dissenters of all Denominations?

*Diff.* Mistake me not, I do not mean the Papist, nor the Quaker, nor the Ana-

baptist, nor the Socinian, nor the circumcised Jew, nor--

*Ch.* Oh ! I know who you mean, the Presbyterian only.

*Diff.* I do.

*Ch.* And pray, what Persecution do they suffer in *England*? are they troubled for their Religion? may they not educate their Children their own Way? is not their Property equally secured to them, and by the same Laws as our own? do we not love and esteem, nay countenance those among them that have Merit, in common with others? do we not intermarry with them, and converse neighbourly with them? do they not preach and pray, plead at the Bar, serve in the Army and Fleet, and in Corporations, vote for Members of Parliament, and sit in the House, hold Civil Employments, follow their Trades and Merchandize equally with others? in a word, is there any Distinction made between them and us, except that they enter not our Pulpits? if so, what Reason have they to complain of the least Hardship?

*Diff.* Alas, Sir ! it grieves my Heart to hear you run on at this Rate; not persecuted! yes, I say, severely persecuted.

*Ch.* Indeed I shou'd be glad to know wherein.

*Diff.*

*Diff.* Why, do ye not exclude us from serving our Country?

*Ch.* In general I deny it, and have shew'd you ye are not; but now I perceive your Meaning fully, you would have the Test-Act repeal'd. Your talking of Persecution mislead me.

*Diff.* That is the very Thing; and 'tis a Scandal that ever such an Act should pass, whereby sober, nay, I may say, the best Christians are distinguish'd from their Countrymen, to their Prejudice.

*Ch.* I don't see the Prejudice you receive by the Test-Act, for were it not in being, you would have as few Employments bestow'd on you as now, and presently I'll shew you why. But in the first Place, I suppose ye are not uneasy to be excluded from Employments of Trouble and no Profit?

*Diff.* There's no Occasion to ask that Question.

*Ch.* Very well; then pray consider the Smallness of your Number compar'd with that of the Establish'd Church; By the way, I suppose you think there ought to be an Establish'd Church?

*Diff.* I do; we all hold it.

*Ch.* 'Tis fair to own it, since you find me building an Argument upon it; tho' had you deny'd it, you must have given  
up



up the Churches of *Scotland* and *Geneva*, which I am sure you would be very unwilling to do. But to proceed, if there must be an Establish'd Church, it must be establish'd and protected by Laws, which Laws you know are made by the Concurrence of Kings, Lords and Commons, and the Commons chosen by the People.

*Diff.* All this is true.

*Ch.* Laws therefore must be suppos'd to express the general Sense of the Nation, and the Church establish'd by Law to be the Genius of it. Thus the Bent of the *Scots* being Presbitery, we see it establish'd there, and thus the prevailing Disposition of the *English* being Episcopacy, we see Episcopacy establish'd here. Since this is the Case, 'tis reasonable to think the Crown will always favour most such Subjects as profess themselves Members of the Establish'd Church, and consequently bestow the valuable Employments on such only, especially in *England*, where Bishops are counted a Support to Monarchy. What Advantage then would you get by repealing the Test?

*Diff.* You argue very plausibly, but there may be Reasons for the Crown's acting otherwise, according to Circumstances.

*Ch.*



*Ch.* Pray what are your's?

*Diff.* Why, are we not a great Body in the Nation? are we not worth Regard, nay Courting? are there not Parties in the Land, Men opposite to the Measures of the Court, Tories and High-church, with whom if we should join, the Government might be much distress'd?

*Ch.* There is a Party indeed that endeavour to distress the Government, because certain Chiefs among them are out of Employment; and I have often heard you and your Friends exclaim against 'em for it, but would you act the same Thing you condemn in them, nay join them too?

*Diff.* Necessity may drive us to it.

*Ch.* What Necessity? is Dominion founded in Grace? is it necessary to Religion that ye should have Places?

*Diff.* You seem to think Places necessary to Religion, when you confine them to those of your own Church.

*Ch.* While I think it right that there should be an Establish'd Church, I must think it necessary that such Persons should be in Power who profess themselves of that Church, and are to be suppos'd best inclin'd to support it. This common Sense teaches, and is no more than what Christian States have done in all Ages:  
Even

Even you yourselves, when you were the Establish'd Church, allow'd no Employments to the Church of *England*, nor any inferior Sect.

*Diff.* I can't deny it; but those were perilous Times, and the Minds of Men much ulcerated against each other by mutual Jealousies, Revenge, Self-defence, and the like. We think otherwise now, and hope you will think so too, when you reflect on our Loyalty to his late and present Majesty.

*Ch.* You shew'd yourselves so, because your Interest led you to it; your Protection, not to mention your Expectations, made you so, but not your Principles; tho' I will do you the Justice to own, you are not so rigid to them as formerly: Nevertheless you will grant me, the Party whom you threaten to join with us'd you very ill when they were in Power, and indeed persecuted you.

*Diff.* They did indeed; yourselves cry'd out upon it.

*Ch.* Did they not shut up your Churches, imprison and hang your Ministers in some Reigns, and take away your Schools of Education in another?

*Diff.* 'Tis too sad a Truth; we were made the Off-scowering of the Land.

*Ch.*

*Ch.* And have we not redeem'd you from all this ; to whom do you owe the Peace and Liberty you enjoy, but to us Whigs ?

*Diff.* I confess, next under God, we owe it only to you.

*Ch.* And do you then threaten us with joining with our Enemies ? You can't do it without putting the Power in the Malecontents and Tories Hands, for you see they are united in distressing the Government, and then you may expect the same Usage from them again : The same Principles will produce again the same Practices : Remember you boast it was you who restor'd King *Charles II.* and remember how you were rewarded for it.

*Diff.* We hope never again to see such unrighteous Times, and are secure under a gracious Prince.

*Ch.* He is indeed a most gracious Prince, but he is a wise one too, and will always consider the Bent of his People's Inclinations. Besides, you know our Princes are not absolute, but must have the Concurrence of their Subjects in Matters of Consequence : Should such a Humour sieze the Nation again, as reign'd in the Times we are speaking of, the best inclin'd Prince would find it difficult to shew you Favour.

C

*Diff.*



*Diff.* But God is above all.

*Ch.* And so he was when ye were persecuted; but leave this Canting, if Men do foolish Things, God is not bound to redress them in the Manner we could wish. I have often heard you say, the Kingdom of Christ is not of this World; if so, why do you say you are persecuted for not enjoying Employments?

*Diff.* Rather why do you not let us have our Share of them?

*Ch.* I'll tell you when you have answer'd me a few Questions: Pray don't you look upon yourselves to be righteous Men, and zealous for Presbitery?

*Diff.* You need not ask that Question: I trust you see it by our Behaviour: Were we otherwise we needed not complain, for we should for our Interest comply with the Establish'd Church.

*Ch.* And is it not the Duty of good Men, as they have Opportunity and Power, to advance the Religion they profess?

*Diff.* Doubtless it is.

*Ch.* You think Presbitery the most true, and purer than Episcopacy?

*Diff.* Ah, would that all England open'd their Eyes!

*Ch.* Will you deny then, that if you were in Power you would labour a perfect



perfect Reformation after your Manner?

*Diff.* Deny it? No, it would be our Glory and Duty to labour it.

*Ch.* I ask no more: If this would be the Case, 'tis equally my Duty to prevent your coming into Employment, for Power follows Employment, and I might contribute by letting you in to establish Presbitery, which Persuasion you know I am not of.

*Diff.* Why cannot the Church of *England* remain secure, tho' we should be admitted into Employments?

*Ch.* This is an odd Question from one who owns, if he had Power he would endeavour to subvert the Church, but whether it might or not, I am sure the admitting you would occasion much Division in the Ministry, Parliament and Kingdom. There would be a perpetual Struggle, the one to maintain, the other to advance themselves, and the mutual Jealousies would be endless. What a Condition would the Nation then be in! We have already too much Division among us, and we need not increase it.

*Diff.* But this would rather lessen it, for by our hearty Conjunction we should be strong enough to suppress our mutual Enemies.

*Ch* No, Sir, it would on the contrary increase our Divisions, for assuredly we should fall out among ourselves, and you (if you had more Countenance than now you have) becoming more powerful, would on every Occasion threaten to leave us, whereas now your weak Condition obliges you to stick close to us for Protection. By your own Confession you would not be easy 'till you had reform'd the Establish'd Church to your Mind; And you would think it no unreasonable Thing to frighten the Administration into your Schemes, by menacing to join with the Malecontents, in case we did not comply with you, who no doubt would make you as flattering Overtures as King *Charles* did, to obtain your Consent to his Restoration, or as King *James* did, to gain your Approbation of his dispensing Power.

*Diss.* Consider, Sir, we are Men of like Passions with yourselves, and Ill-usage may tempt the best Men to Resentment: We think we have a natural Right as Subjects to hold Employments, and tho' we enjoy the full Liberty of our Religion, and our civil Rights in common with you, yet we have Families to provide for, and an honest Ambition to serve our Country, which we are now debar'd from by this wicked Test-Act.

*Ch.*

*Ch.* If the Want of a few Employments is capable of tempting you to Faction, and to join with our common Enemies, you are not the godly Men you would have us take you for; and as to a natural Right to bear Offices, I never heard of it only from yourselves: Naked we came into the World, and naked we must go out of it. Besides, if this were true, there is not an individual Subject the King has, but may plead the same against his Neighbour, and so there would never be Peace upon Earth. We are born free, and have a natural Right to Liberty, and to the benevolent Offices of our Fellow Creatures, but to be born to a Right to Places is to be born to Subjection rather than Freedom, and I doubt not but you would think so too, if Employments yielded nothing for the Trouble of executing them.

*Diff.* But when so considerable a Number as we are find ourselves by Law prevented from holding Employments, is it an equal Thing? Is it not a Hardship that among the Variety of Employments we should be admitted to none, and put on a foot with Papists?

*Ch.* States in the Affairs of the Publick are to guard against any Persuasion whatever that may disturb it, and you are  
not



not on the same foot with the Papist, who without renouncing their Religion can't be employ'd; but you, who are nearer to us in your Principles; and whom we look upon as good Friends (while under some Restriction) as well as Protestants, may be and actually are admitted to Offices on easier Terms, wherefore your Case is not the same; but I suppose you will give me Occasion to speak more of this hereafter. In the mean Time, what are the Numbers you boast of so much? By Computation you are not the fiftieth Man in the Kingdom, including all Denominations of Dissenters, and yourselves not the half of them, for the Quakers, Anabaptists, Fifth-monarchy Men, Sabbatarians, Independants, Brownists, Muggletonians, Seekers and Piercites, exceed you Presbiterians in Number, all whom I know you would be averse to see employ'd, and would if you were uppermost exclude. Now computing the Inhabitants of *England*, exclusive of Papists, to be 7,000,000, the fiftieth Part of 7,000,000 is but 140,000, out of which deducting the half for Dissenters of other Denominations, you remain but 70,000, of which allowing five Souls to one Family, there remains but 14,000 (which is one Male of a Family, the rest being  
Women



Women and Children) fit by Age to be employ'd in any Kind of Office ; and of these fourteen Men in twenty are unfit for publick Business, thro' the Narrowness of their Education, and the Vocations they follow, being chiefly Labourers, Farmers, Mechanicks, Merchants, and here and there a Gentleman ; so that after all your boasted Number there are but 700 Persons who receive this Injury. Now turn the Tables, and see how it stands with the Church of *England* : Deduct 140,000 Dissenters of all Denominations out of 7,000,000, and there remains 6,860,000, of whom allowing by the same Proportion five to a Family, there remains 1372000 Heads of Families, and deducting 19 Men out of 20, as in the former Case, there remains 68600 fit to be employ'd : What a Disproportion is there between the Church of *England* and the Presbyterians ! what is 700 to 68600 ? If these last have but an equal Right to Civil Employments with yourselves, which you must own they have (and I say more, by reason they are in Principle for maintaining that establish'd Church which your good Men if in Power are bound to level with your own, if not suppress) would it be reasonable, think you, to prefer you before them, when  
every

every Presbyterian that can pretend to an Office has 98 Members of our Church to encounter?

*Diff.* If the Disproportion you make between us and the Establish'd Church be as you say, your Argument is not to be deny'd, but I hope we are more in Number than that?

*Ch.* A little more or less makes no great Difference, but if you are more, so may, for what I know, the whole Bulk of the People be, tho' I think my Computation a fair one; but supposing I were mistaken in the half, my Argument still holds good.

*Diff.* I think otherwise, for you have taken into your Number all the disaffected Church of *England* Men, all the Tories in the Nation, whom I hope not to see employ'd.

*Ch.* And do you hope that, when you was just now so ready to join thsm?

*Diff.* That was only to provoke you to Jealousy, by representing what might possibly happen.

*Ch.* In other Words, you would by Menaces gain what in Reason cannot be granted, but we know you too wise to abandon your real Friends for experienc'd Enemies. To say the Truth, it is this Love of worldly Goods that occasions all the Bustle, and we may have the Male-contents

Malecontents and Tories to-morrow, on Condition of employing them : When 'tis worth the while for the Government to gain particular Persons 'tis done, but some stand on too high Terms. Thence comes all our Trouble. Yet should you be unreasonable, and remain dissatisfy'd when you have no Manner of Cause, they may chance to be let in, and then where are you?

*Diff.* You have said weighty Things, and have ever found me a reasonable Man. I will consider all you have told me, and talk it with my Friends : But I have one Objection more to the Test-Act, which lies heavy on my Spirit.

*Ch.* What is it ? I would satisfy you in every thing.

*Diff.* It is the Scandal our holy Faith receives from the Profanation of its most sacred Rite, the Sacrament of the Supper of our Lord, which all who enter upon Employments are obliged to receive : A crying Abuse, to convert that Duty to a secular and political Purpose !

*Ch.* This Objection, which I expected, made me say that I supposed you would give me Occasion to speak of your Admittance to Employments under certain Restrictions, but I hope to clear it before we have done, and in very few  
D Words,



Words. You know the Participation of this Sacrament is the distinguishing Mark of all Christian Churches, and has ever been so: By this you discern who are of your Church, and we who are of ours, and without it we should neither of us know who are of either. It is therefore no Crime in itself to distinguish our Members this Way, because all Churches do the same. But you will say it becomes a Sin, if we distinguish Men who aim at Employments by it: Why so? Are not they Members of our Church? At least they ought to be, and are suppos'd so, else Employments would not be bestow'd upon them, for the Intention of our Law is, that none but such should serve. What Harm is there then if Men, when rais'd to Offices, should give that Token of their being Members of our Church, which they ought and are supposed to perform frequently at other Times? The Taking the Sacrament is a Duty when out of Employment, why should it be a Scandal to take it when we accept one? How often have Persons, defamed in their Reputation, taken it to clear themselves, yet was this ever condemn'd?

*Diff.* No, but by obliging Employment Persons to take it, many wicked ones



ones approach it with unhallow'd Lips,  
to the Danger of their Souls.

*Ch.* This Objection ought rather to arise from ourtelves than from you, nevertheless none of ours make it, except profligate and weak Persons, who either have no Mind to come to the Sacrament at all, or who have not consider'd the Thing in its proper Light, but these I hope are few; some I fear there may be so profane, but this the Law cannot know; besides, they have all three Months Time to recollect themselves, and many more Months spent in Pursuit and Expectation of their Preferments, Leisure sufficient to amend their Lives and come duly prepared; and if Men neglect this Duty at other Times, on Account of their habitual ill Lives, their performing it on this Occasion unworthily will add little to the Weight of their *Sins*, their Condition with respect to God will be the same.

*Diff.* But before this Act the Minister might refuse to administer the Sacrament to a known wicked Liver, which now he is obliged to give him, though he knew him ever so bad a Christian.

*Ch.* This Objection should come from our Clergy, if they thought it one, but not from you, who have nothing to do with what passes in our Churches, yet I have heard none of them make it, neither indeed have I heard of such Refusal given before the Act was made; for how should the Minister know the State of his Soul who presents himself, his Repentance and holy Resolutions? Men may have been wicked Livers, and yet touch'd with Remorse before they came, and they may have appear'd good Men, though secretly vicious, nay guilty of some heinous Sin the very Night before their communicating: This the Minister cannot know, but charitably ought to hope the best. — These, my Friend, are all Pretences, urg'd as I said before by Men who desire to go on in their evil Ways, and Neglect of the Sacrament, not offer'd out of a Regard to its Honour, which by keeping away they shew their Contempt of. I never heard good Men think them of any Weight, especially considering that this Act is a special Security against Papists creeping into Offices, which I am sure you would guard against as well as we. — But speak  
the

the Truth, are you not uneasy to see your own People qualify themselves this Way for Employments ?

*Diff.* To own the Truth, I am.

*Ch.* Why, I am sorry you think ill of your own Friends for qualifying themselves thus, they who are still sober and religious Men.

*Diff.* I do not think they do it against their Conscience, but very unadvisedly and imprudently, for it weakens our Numbers, and gives others among us an Itch to follow their Example; Besides, it scandalizes many of us, who walk more steadily.

*Ch.* But you cannot blame us for endeavouring their nearer Relation to us, by inviting them over upon Terms which both we and they think lawful: This shews our Charity, and how little Distinction we make of you, which was what I intended to speak of; but since you think your Members without Sin may occasionally communicate with us, I need say no more of it, only remember that since every one of you, who is occasionally qualify'd in our Churches, is on the same foot for holding Employments with ourselves, you cannot say you lie under the least Hardship, and  
that

that they who refuse to do it, while 'tis confest to be no Sin, set themselves at such a Distance from us, that it would be dangerous to employ them. There are some among you who hold our Church to be corrupt both in Government, Discipline and Liturgy, and who put the Church above the State, denying the King's Supremacy: We believe those who approach our Communion are not of this Sort, but they who refuse it must be so, and therefore the Test-Act is really of use to distinguish who among you are good Subjects, and who otherwise, which is an Argument many of ours will use in Favour of the Test, who perhaps have not a sufficient Regard for the Church's Interest; so that you will find, whenever you attempt its Repeal, a greater Opposition than you think for. Have you any more Objections?

*Diff.* Truly I can think of none at present.

*Ch.* Why then at your Return I hope you will satisfy your Friends.

*Diff.* You have so fairly convinced me, that I assure you I will do my Endeavour, if I do not come too late.

*Ch.*



*Ch.* Too late! What do you mean by that?

*Diff.* Why, you must know it has been resolved to solicit our Friends in Parliament this Session, to use all Manner of Means for repealing the Test; but I see there are such Reasons against it, that we can't expect it, and it may do us more Harm than Good to stir in it.

*Ch.* You may depend on it, 'twill never succeed. There's no-body but sees 'tis Interest you have at Heart, and your Friends should consider, that to pretend Scruple of Conscience in Matters where worldly Interest is at the Bottom, is unworthy of Christians, and easily seen thro'.

*Diff.* I know it very well, and if they will follow my Advice, the Design shall for the present drop.

*Ch.* Give me leave before we part to remind you of what I have been very credibly informed, namely, that when you apply'd for the Repeal of the Occasional Bill, you assured the Government it was all you desired, and it should content you.

*Diff.* I confess some of our Chiefs did say so.

*Ch.* It seems those Chiefs have treacherous Memories, if it be true, that they have labour'd an Agreement among you, to vote for no Whig next Election who shall oppose the Repeal of the Test this Session, which is another Piece of News I have learn'd.

*Diff.* This I have heard, and did declare against: I put them in Mind of the Frog and Log.

*Ch.* You needed not have gone to *Æsop* for Arguments, your Party is not of such Weight in the Scale; but this you might fairly have represented, that such a Proceeding must inevitably lose you the Friends you have, and leave you without Protection on a Day of Trial. It will revive the History of former Times, which cannot be for your Advantage, and it will expose you to the Bulk of the Nation for a restless, unreasonable, ingrateful Party. Favour you will merit of none, the Contempt of all will fall on you. You will become a Faction, and were you to grow considerable, the Friends of the Government, the Malecontents, and the Tories, would all concur

cur to depress a Party which sticks at nothing to advance itself, and is no longer sure to any Side, than while they are humour'd, though their own substantial Good, the Safety of the Government, and the Tranquility of the Nation is put in Compromise. Do I say true?

*Diff.* You are undoubtedly very kind in dealing so freely with me, and tho' I still must wish the Test-Act were repealed, yet your Arguments for not attempting it now are unanswerable: It is not possible we should succeed, when such as you who are a Friend to us are resolv'd to oppose it: wherefore I shall labour all I can to get the Design suspended, which 'tis possible you may find, for we are ourselves much divided concerning it.

*Ch.* I am sure they are the wisest Heads among you who are against it, and I doubt whether your Enemies are not at the Bottom of this Affair; they may hope to serve themselves by it, in rendering the Nation jealous of your Friends, and so obtaining a Parliament to their Mind; but when that is done, depend upon it they will cast you off, and then you may say with the two Kings of

E

BRENT.

BRENTFORD no Man else will take you.

*Diff.* Well, Sir, I'll take my Leave of you, and lose no Time in Town, for the Session draws near, and I shall have a great many Journies to ride. I desire the Continuance of your Friendship, and God be with you.

*Ch.* Adieu, Sir.



F I N I S.





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